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C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 002536

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR(DICARLO),
EUR/SCE(HOH/SILBERSTEIN/FOOKS/STINCHCOMB); NSC FOR BRAUN;
OSD FOR BEIN

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR BK
SUBJECT: BOSNIA - RADMANOVIC "OPTIMISTIC" THAT RESOLUTION
TO CRISIS IS CLOSE

REF: SARAJEVO 2535

Classified By: Ambassador Charles English for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: On November 23, Ambassador met with Bosnian-Serb member of the Tri-Presidency Nebojsa Radmanovic to discuss the ongoing political crisis and the outcome of the November 22 meeting of coalition political party leaders. The Ambassador also asked Radmanovic whether recent statements by Republika Srpska (RS) Prime Minister Milorad

Dodik that all foreigners should leave positions of authority in Bosnian institutions by January 1 constituted a new demand on the international community that would hinder the resolution of the crisis. Radmanovic told the Ambassador that he believed the November 22 meeting was "partially successful" and that he was "optimistic" that the dispute over the High Representative's measures could be resolved in the coming two weeks. Radmanovic also expressed hope that enough progress would be made on meeting European Union conditionally on police reform to permit an initialing of a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) by the end of the year. Radmanovic said he has unaware of Dodik's comments on foreigners in Bosnian institutions, but assured the Ambassador that it was a political position and not a firm demand on the international community. END SUMMARY

LOOKING FOR SOME FORWARD MOMENTUM

¶12. (C) Ambassador met with President Radmanovic November 23 to continue their discussions on Bosnia's ongoing political crisis. The Ambassador told Radmanovic that he hoped that some positive momentum could be realized following the November 22 meeting of coalition party leaders, which produced agreement on a plan to implement the Mostar Declaration on police reform (Reftel). The Ambassador stressed the importance of continuing inter-party dialogue on the HighRep's October 19 measures, but underscored that any agreement among political parties must be consistent with the substance of the HighRep's proposals. The Ambassador also asked about Dodik's November 22 statement that all foreigners serving in executive positions in Bosnian institutions, including the State Court and Indirect Taxation Authority, should leave Bosnia by January 1. The Ambassador stressed that such a position, if a demand, was entirely unacceptable and seemed to be a calculated attempt to perpetuate the crisis in Bosnia.

RADMANOVIC IS "OPTIMISTIC"

¶3. (C) Radmanovic said that after talking with Dodik and Party for Democratic Progress (PDP) Chairman Mladen Ivanic the previous evening, he believed that the party leaders' meeting was "partially successful" and he was "optimistic" that the groundwork had been laid bring the political crisis to a close. Radmanovic said that the proposal on parliamentary quorum rules that Parliament Speakers Niko Lozancic and Milorad Zivkovic proposed provided for "90 percent" of what the High Representative sought and should be accepted. Radmanovic told the Ambassador that he was concerned that Party for Democratic Action (SDA) Chairman Sulejman Tihic would seek to block the proposal in parliament, which would then lead to the High Representative imposing his own measures. Such a situation, Radmanovic said, would "re-ignite the crisis." Radmanovic said he would speak with President Haris Silajdzic later in the day and coordinate their points on police reform. Radmanovic said he believed that a deal could be at hand, and optimistically volunteered that a SAA could be initialed by the close of the year.

NO NEW DEMANDS

¶4. (C) Radmanovic seemed taken aback by Dodik's comments on the foreigners in Bosnian institutions and said he had been unaware of them. Radmanovic told the Ambassador that as a matter of political policy, the Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) did support local control of all government institutions, which would also be a pre-condition for EU membership. Radmanovic noted that this position was not a secret, and he had himself articulated a vision of Bosnia

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where the Office of the High Representative would close and all decision-making would pass to local officials during the February 2007 Peace Implementation Council meetings. Radmanovic said that such a situation could only develop through a consensus decision by all international community and local political leaders, and that Dodik also knew it would be "process" that would not occur on a arbitrary deadline. When pressed, Radmanovic assured the Ambassador that Dodik's statements did not constitute a new demand on the international community and was not tied to the current political crisis.

COMMENT: NO CONCESSIONS ON SUBSTANCE

¶5. (C) Radmanovic's optimism contrasts sharply with the general mood among political analysts here and the average Bosnian. Despite the November 22 agreement among party leaders to implement the Mostar Declaration, Dodik continues to insist that the HighRep must either amend or rescind his October 19 measures. Were the High Representative to take such a precedent setting action, his authority would instantly crumble. We hope Radmanovic's observations about Dodik's call for the departure of internationals from Bosnia is correct. The one constant in the political crisis has been a regular upping of the ante by Dodik, and his statement may have been designed to ensure he has a pretext for confrontation available when he is ready to escalate further.

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